

82d AIRBORNE DIVISION



SAFETY GRAM

AFVZ-SU-PM
June 2004

30

SAFETY AWARENESS BULLETIN FOR DIETARY / PERFORMANCE ENHANCING SUPPLEMENTS

Background:

In the past few months the 82D ABN DIV has had several heat injuries. During interviews with the patients who had these heat injuries, several stated that they were using dietary / performance enhancing supplements. For the last few years there has been a rise in the number of heat injuries which may have been caused by the use of these supplements. Therefore, troopers and commanders must be informed consumers and knowledgeable about dietary supplements.

Facts:

(1) "Dietary supplements" is a general term for a variety of products: Vitamins, minerals, amino acids, proteins, botanicals (including herbal preparations), glandular extracts and other animal products.

(2) Often there are no written claims on the product label but the name implies a certain effect (e.g. Hydroxycut, Heart Guard, Peak Performance, Joint Rescue, Anabolic Fuel). Many supplements provide none of the implied benefits or only a very slight benefit. Troopers must realize that these items are unregulated and no one is required to provide proof of effectiveness or safety to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prior to marketing. Most advertising is also unregulated, and there is no guarantee that the contents of the bottle match the statements on the label, often resulting in considerable variability in strength of the active ingredients from one lot to another.

(3) Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict who is most likely to suffer adverse health effects from a dietary supplement. In most cases, it is not that a dietary supplement is clearly unsafe for everyone, but that it is potentially unsafe for specific individuals. For example, Hydroxycut is used for weight loss—if you read the warning label, certain individuals shouldn't use this product as per the following web site (http://www.hydroxycut.com/PRODUCT_POPUP/new_hydroxycut_sup.shtml). Even though the new Hydroxycut doesn't contain ephedra (which has been banned by the FDA,) it still contains other components that have adverse affects which can lead to illness and injury, if not taken in accordance with the manufacturers label.

(4) Troopers should tell their doctor about any dietary supplements they are taking—this is important information, along with other medications (including anything not prescribed-i.e over the counter drugs like Aspirin, Allergy medications, etc.). Also, tell your doctor if you suspect that any dietary supplement caused an adverse event. Serious adverse events (fatal, life-threatening, permanently/significantly disabling, or requiring intervention to prevent permanent impairment or damage) should be reported to the FDA.

(5) Leaders should find out which troopers are taking these supplements and help educate them on the proper use of these substances. You can accomplish this by giving classes during NCOPD. If you need assistance POC's for this Safety Gram are SSG Exum and SSG Smith at 432-1907, Division Surgeons Office Preventive Medicine section.

(6) There are a variety of reliable sources of information about dietary supplements, to include these military-sponsored websites:

<https://allamericanet.bragg.army.mil/surg/default.htm>
<http://www.brooks.af.mil/web/af/altmed/HOMEFRAME.htm>
<http://hooah4health.com>
<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw>

Womack Army Medical Center has dietitians on staff with expertise on the effects of various dietary supplements. Call 907-8703 for additional information or to set up unit training.